

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia**  
**30 November – 7 December 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 4c – Tuesday afternoon discussion session**

Question: I've been feeling very disturbed post lunch. It's a particular disturbance I'm familiar with and it brought a lot of flight-or-flight, "I don't want to meditate. What the hell am I doing?" It eased off slightly when I was counting – just to three. I want to know how do you manage this?

Linda: As best you can. There's no perfect way to manage it. You can talk about it like this, and I can say it's obviously deep resistance, which you might see as a bad thing but it's not a bad thing of course. It's going to come up and a lot of this practice is about dealing with the resistance and keeping going, because every step of the way there's going to be some form of resistance. Your mind is going to try to undermine you and stop you doing this because it's desperate. And the more desperate it gets, the deeper the resistance, which you can often see as, "Oh, I'm doing worse than usual. It's really, really bad."

But really, it's just very deep resistance. So the only thing you can do is stay here. Don't try and fight it. Don't think that you should be dealing with it in a better way. There's no perfect way to deal with it except to just sit with it. You will be disturbed by it. Try and accept that disturbance rather than trying to make the disturbance all calm, "I should be feeling calm and still." Get into that disturbance. Really feel it in your body but stay as still as you can when you're sitting. And the main thing is, don't leave. Just sit through it. It will change, it will come and go.

Question: I was feeling it right in my guts. I couldn't even breathe in my belly. I was breathing in my chest. Still, I feel, "Oh, my god, how can I not be scared." Something like that, because it's a bit related to survival, "Oh, I might die or something," because of that kind of fear or disturbance.

Linda: Well, the closer you get to that feeling of death, the closer you come to this, to what you're really looking for. So as you get closer, at times, you become more and more deeply disturbed. And like I said, there's no perfect way of dealing with it. Just keep going. Talking about it like this can be really good. It can take the power away a bit from the resistance. But the resistance is necessary. You're going to feel it in different ways – feel incredibly disturbed, disillusioned, "I can't do this. I hate this. This is horrible." It's all part of it. Everyone who's in this state has gone through it, whether they admit it or not, they've gone through this – and I certainly did many, many times.

And in that talk from Roshi Sama, sometimes he felt he was going to die. That's how you feel at times. Other times, there's nothing else you want to do. So tomorrow or tonight it might be completely different. And often when you do go through a deep, disturbing resistance like this it happens before some sort of deeper realisation. I'm not saying that that will happen. But just going through the resistance is the important thing. Being able to bear it, going through it, coming out the other end, having a bit of a breather and then another lot will come on. Eventually it stops but it's not when you're ready, it's when the time is right. In that way you don't have any control over it, and that's the hard bit.

Doing this is intensifying the whole thing, of course. But this isn't about control. So when it's particularly strong, as we've been saying today, don't be scared to cry – allow yourself to be

vulnerable. It's not a weakness. And then you get up again and you're stronger from going through it.

Question: During the day it's not too bad to keep my thoughts under control but at night, especially during light sleep or sometimes when I wake up, the mind is just racing. Is there anything I should do about this? Or do I just keep it racing.

Linda: There's nothing much you can do. In the night, try breathing. Have you been sleeping?

Question: Yes, I have been. Sometimes it's light sleep or I wake or a dream and the mind is racing.

Linda: Try not to worry about it. It's going to happen. And we're not really trying to keep it under control. It's more keep it at bay, so we don't allow ourselves to get completely taken away by it. But in the night, often people have a bit trouble sleeping too, because you can feel really energised. So it's good that you are sleeping. But I would say don't worry about it. Breathe, watch it.

Part of it is that you're just tired, and it will come up when you're tired even more strongly. So try not to do anything much with it except breathe, let it go, and then get back here and get into it. At the end of the retreat it will be different. You'll feel the effects of it after the retreat more deeply. After the retreat you'll become more aware of the effects of what you're doing. But while you're doing it, in any sort of gap, it will get in and try and destabilise you and disturb you. So the thing is, especially if you're tired like that, don't try and fight it at those time. Just let it go, breathe, do whatever you can.

Question: I felt very hazy and sleepy to start off with but after morning tea I started to feel more alert and stayed with the breath a lot longer. It occurred to me how amazing it is that the breath is in the present moment. But I was breathing very slowly and I realised that since the present moment is really fast, I'm only getting little bits of it. Or is so much happening in each of those stages of the breath that I can't see it all?

Linda: Yes. So everything happens in now. Whatever speed it appears to be moving, it's actually happening now. However slowly you're moving or quickly you're moving it's the momentum that creates that idea of time, not the actually speed that you're moving. It's the momentum beneath that where you're thinking you're going somewhere. So whether you're breathing quickly or slowly, it's still now. But when you are breathing slowly it can be a more difficult at times to be in it, because the mind can get in those gaps. So I used to change it around. Sometimes I breathed quite quickly, in my belly. Other times it would be very light and slow. So it changes around.

Question: At one stage I was focusing so intently on the belly trying to count and trying to catch the breath that the focus was worse than just being aware of everything and aware of the belly.

Linda: Was worse? What do you mean?

Question: It felt contrived. It didn't feel I was there, it was the mind forcing the self to be there.

Linda: Well, it can feel like that. When you're counting the breath it can feel a bit contrived and not natural, like you're not getting deeply into anything. And quite cold – "What's the point of this? I'm just counting, seeing a thought and counting again." But often at the end of sit, after having done that, you can feel really quite light and energised. So while you're actually counting don't worry about how you're feeling or what's happening. Just try and stay with the counting, down here. It's

just a way of reining in the thinking. So you start to think and you come back to one. It's like an extra anchor.

But it is going to feel contrived at times and it sort of is. How contrived is the mind? You have to really use something like that – some sort of structure – to keep at it and really keep you here. It might not feel like anything in particular, but really, it's preventing from getting deeply into one thought. You might have a few thoughts in between one and two and it makes you realise how easily you can get taken away by a thought. But then you come back to the number, do it again, then you might lose it, and come back to one again. Don't worry about it feeling contrived. I feel, you do need some sort of structure to really break down that very deeply entrenched structure of the mind and thinking. And the breath is a really good way to do it. So keep doing that. Persevere.

Linda: Are you okay?

Question: Yes, this retreat is easier than I thought it would be. I'm a bit scared to say that, but less suffering, and I feel fairly still. Yesterday, after you'd spoken about counting, and I reflected that I've been counting all through every sit for years. So I thought I'd try dropping it for a while, so I did. It's been quite good – I feel quite an immediate connection with the breath in the belly, and staying with the breath in the belly, a bit, for me. And I've been feeling so grateful for you. I think it's also something about that "good grace," and some kind of softening. I recognise that the love – I was sitting here just now and I realised I couldn't have stayed with being-with-the-sensation before, I would have felt it was being harsh on myself to not let myself have distraction and indulgence and go-with. It's something about loving myself and being loved. It doesn't feel like it's harsh to stay with it.

Linda: Yes, I know what you mean. A lot of people look at this practice – particularly from the outside, and at certain times – and see it as this very harsh, austere practice. And it's not – it's really not. And particularly – not that there's a definite end – but at the end of the main practice, you see it's not harsh at all. But that firmness is very necessary, otherwise you are going to try to justify any thought. You're going to say, "I need to be thinking about this, I need to be emotional about this, I have to, I'm justified in doing that." So you do need to be – not harsh – but firm and ruthless about it at times and go, "No, I'm not going to do that." Then you see it leads to something that's not harsh at all. It's the softest, deepest, most loving state ever.

In fact, most people have got no idea what love is. It's just this state non-judgment – not judging. It's not this airy-fairy thing. It's a state where you're not judging anything, particularly yourself. And when you stop judging yourself, you stop judging everyone else – there's no need, you can't do it.

Linda: How are you going M.?

Question: I haven't tried to sit through the breaks. During the last sit I felt that momentum come up again, where I would usually think, "Oh, I'm not sitting through enough," even though I had no intention, it still came up. I felt very sad and saw that I trying to force myself to do stuff and was being really harsh with myself. I see that reflected in my life a lot. After I saw that I felt a bit of compassion towards myself and a bit of love. Not forgiveness – because I don't feel I've done something wrong – but maybe just compassion. And that felt good and I felt stronger. Just then I was feeling I wanted more intensity when I was sitting. So it might be bit different where I'm not sitting trying to force myself to do something.

Linda: See tomorrow how you feel, and just do what you feel like doing tomorrow.

Question: I have this sense sometimes of the weight of not being enlightened or something. A sense of all of the sediment of the past in my body, physically feeling it my body. And sometimes lightness is there as well. It's like a weight.

Linda: The weight of being you

Question: Yes, the weight of being held and attached. This sense of wanting to let it just fall off. It feels very much in my physical body.

Linda: Well yes, the body wants to free from its shackles – the mind.

Question: It comes up quite strongly as a real longing to not have that.

Linda: Yes, and that's what the longing is for – to not have that. From what I could see of the enlightened people around me, I wanted to be like that – not like them personally but I wanted to be free. That was the closest I could get to feeling how it could be, when I was around them sometimes. Mainly I just wanted to be free from me, because I just couldn't stand it. That's what fed the longing and made the longing stronger and stronger. And you really do need that longing to go all the way – to be so sick of yourself that you'll do anything, you'll sit through anything, you'll just keep going. But it is in your body. It's all about your body.

Question: It's almost like the vibration of this work is rumbling it all up. I can feel the tension between that longing for freedom but being held back by the things that I still feel attached to.

Linda: Yes, you need to have that longing and that desperate longing at time, but also patience. You have to be patient because it can't all happen at once. It's too much for it to happen all at once. So it's gradually happening. There are certain things you can do to speed it along but really it will happen in its own time too. But there are lots of things you can do to speed it along. It's not like you can sit there and don't do anything because it will probably never happen then. So I really don't know why people say you don't need to do anything. It just seems completely ridiculous to me.

Question: I can't imagine how it would happen.

Linda: It doesn't. That's the thing.

Question: I seem to have been at all ends of the spectrum of feeling deep understanding and then complete shite. I wouldn't know what to say about any of it. This afternoon my mind was very quiet and I just don't trust it. 😊 (Laughing)

Linda: Never trust your mind. It's bit like when children are in the next room and they're quiet – something's going on. 😊 (Laughter)

Question: The most broad thing is that I cycle between different things. Kallara seems to do that with me. I feel some elation or some lifting of my sense of achievement and then I get thrown to the wolves, and that's a very powerful thing. Today the wolves seem a bit further away. But anybody who talks about feeling vulnerable; it's been very like that, with moments of not feeling so vulnerable – but mostly, it's vulnerability and just unknowing, an unknowing of what this thing is.

Question: I've been watching a lot of beating up on myself for different things, like thinking, and quite a bit generally. I was wondering, is being consciously gentle with yourself, without that naturally coming up, okay?

Linda: Be gentle with yourself but be firm with the thinking because if you let a bit in it will just keep going. So when you're actually sitting, be as firm as you can without fighting it. Eventually you do stop beating yourself up and judging yourself but on the way it can become even stronger than ever. You can feel even more ill at ease, inadequate. All that stuff, at times, comes up even more strongly than before. And that's what your mind is trying to do – use whatever it can – and everyone's got their particular weakness that pulls them down – it doesn't matter what it is. And everyone feels insecure in a way. That's why people are as they are. Even if they seem very, very confident and worldly, there's often – I'm not saying always – but often there's a deep insecurity there and they're just more adept at covering it up than some other people.

We've been talking in the last retreat in Newbury and here, to a degree, about introverts and extroverts. I don't like dividing them up but there are some people who aren't as good at being extroverts – they tend to look in more – and that can be a really good thing, to do that.

Question: Sometimes on this retreat and in the last few months, I've wondered if perhaps I should try to be more confident, "This is me. I'm doing whatever."

Linda: Look at things that you don't do out of fear, and things that you do do out of fear. Look at the motivations behind things. But don't try to change who you are.

When realisation happens, it doesn't mean you suddenly become really confident. You just become completely at ease. You just realise you don't know, you don't know anything. But rather than being ill at ease with that and thinking you should know something, you're perfectly happy not knowing anything. So that desire to know things all the time – particularly who you are – goes. Then you just ease into your authentic you. Some people might not notice a huge change but other people will. And you're the one who will notice the change and that's the important thing. So don't try to be someone you're not; don't try and be anyone in particular. But just keep watching that fear, that judgment – and come back to your body.